

Anasarcia

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Anasarcia

Thomas P. Rives

admitted March 24. 1819

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To Robert P. Downman M.D

Influenced, Sir, not only by
a consideration of your high medical
qualifications, but also affected with
a sense of your politeness towards me,
& the advantage which I derived from
your instruction, the following

*Inaugural Dissertation is very
respectfully dedicated to you,

by yours.

Friend & Pupil

The Author.

to the moment to write in

of my thoughts & feelings
but I will try to make it a
few pages & in writing
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Sunday morning Aug 3

1860.

An Inaugural
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ON ANASARCA.

Previous to the immediate consideration of the subject which I have selected, I will make a few remarks, on the nature of dropsy generally.

Dropsy may be defined a pathological collection of a serous or watery fluid, in some part of the body.

In a healthy state of the system, there is always a considerable quantity of fluid thrown into every cavity of the body, which is taken up, by the Lymphaticæ. In a large majority of cases, dropsy is the result of an increased exhalation of this fluid.—

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we may distinguish it into Tonie & Atomie.

Perusing the works of European
Writers, we will find, that most of them
consider it as a disease originating in debility.
But that it is also frequently associated with
an excited and febrile state of the system,
is a fact which was first clearly established in
this country, by the late distinguished
Dr Rush.

Dr Blatchley considers the urine
as a criterion, whereby we may discriminate
between the two species of dropsy. In the
Tonie, he says, the urine is scanty, high
coloured, deposites no sediment, and coagulates
by heat and the nitric acid. In the
Atomie, it is pale, scanty &c, but does not
coagulate as the former. But I consider
the pulse (the grand index of the system) as

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and you subscribe to any of this description.

Anasarca first discovers itself, by a swelling of the feet and ankles, appearing and disappearing for a time in the morning; the tumefaction is soft & inelastic, indentations being readily formed by pressure, gradually the swelling increases, occupying the abdomen, & extending higher up, so as to constitute an exstirpated Anasarca. There is now difficult & uneasy respiration, the violent motions of the lungs being air sufficient, the bonds are loosened, the veins dilated, the surperficial circulation with more or less febrile action. As the disease advances, there is much corporal distension, and ultimately the patient ends his solility.

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The causes of Anasarca are the same as those of dropsy generally, to wit,

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preceding diseases, as the Intermittent Fevers,
Podagra, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Phthisis.
Exanthematic affections, as Scarletina, rubea,
Typhus, Visceral affections. Sometimes dropsy
is the consequence of debility, when we may
suppose the absorbent apparatus to be deficient
in action. Thence diuresis is also as frequent
as urine.

In the cure of Anæmia we
form two general indications, 1st To evacuate
the water collected & 2nd To prevent its
Inaccumulation.

I have before remarked, that there
were two forms of anæmia, namely the venous
& Arterial. I shall first treat of the remedies
proper for the venous form, as that attended
with an excited state of the system.

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Where the means usually resorted to for
depicting and reducing the system becomes
necessary.—

Venesection. The pulse being full,
and active, accompanied also with other
marks of a phlogistic disease, we cannot.
hesitate as to the propriety of the remedy.
In the use of bloodletting, we must be
regulated by the state of the system, and
the degree of arterial excitement. In some
cases, pretty topics & repeated bleeding is
requisite; in other cases only moderate bleedings.

Cathartics. These constitute a very
important class of medicines, in the
treatment of dryness. They operate by
diminishing inflammatory action, & invigorating
the powers of absorption. Formerly it was
customary to give the most drastic. with

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nues more benefit, can we resort to the
Saline & Tartarate preparations. The
Sulpho-tartarate of Potash & Salap in combination,
are the most important articles of this class.
Their effects are sometimes exceedingly prompt;
& they have often dispensed empirical
welling, without the use of any other
remedy.

Diuretics. At the head of this list,
the bromate Tartarate indubitably stands. It
present a mess with the concurrent application
to physicians. It was originally introduced
to public notice, by Dr. Horner of Edinburgh.
It frequently acts as a combined operation
on the Kidneys, & bowels. When we wish
to augment its diuretic power, we should
give at the same time a considerable
quantity of water. It is now generally admitted,
although hitherto a subject of dispute,

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among physicians, that it is unnecessary to restrain patients in the use of water. The diuretic effects, ^{particularly} are ~~not~~ ^{very} much increased.

Pilla Martimino. This is an invaluable remedy in every variety of dropsy. It must be recollected, however, that it is stimulant in its operation, & hence improper, when the disease is accompanied with fibrile action. It is highly improved by a combination with Calomel. With respect to the dose, it should be given so as to excite a moderate degree of nausea.

Painfully adapted to fibrile cases is the Nitras Potash. The continued use of this medicine has the effect of impaireing the digestive organs; & hence when it has been employed sufficiently long to cure it

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efficacy, without producing satisfactory results, it should be discontinued. As a substitute, we may use the Spt. Aether. Nitroli, which in order to be of any efficacy must be liberally employed, as in the dose of, iiij or vij.

Fixed Urticariae — are also recommended as very good diuretics, of which the Potassa seems preferable.

Some of the Alliaceous are occasionally employed as diuretics.

Allium Porrostatinum. This though a medicinal remedy, is yet an active diuretic. Even juice of the plant suffices this property, but the root in decoction is preferable.

Odaphorries have sometimes been productive

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have been prevailing w^t they are well
worth of a trial.

MERCURY. In southern climates, dropsy,
is very frequently associated, with vesical
affections, & in those cases, mercury becomes
indispensably necessary. It should be given
to the extent of a moderate salivation.

In closing this part of my subject, I
might here enumerate, Abstinence from
dissipation, hard labour, fevers, & other causes, evi-
dently of a debilitating nature, which
have occasionally done good, in this species
of dropsy. Several such cases are related
by Dr. Rush.

I proceed now to consider the
other forms, in their connexion.

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namely, the Tonics.

The remedy here, should be such stimulant substances as are calculated to excite general vigor, or determine the fluxes to the urinary organs.

Tonics. The best tonic medicines are the Peruvian Bark, vegetable Senna & Chalybecter. The diet should be nutritious & agreeable particularly enjoining proportion to the strength of the patient. It should be of the active kind, such as, mutton, walking & riding on horseback.

Diuretics. The first of the stimulant diuretics which I shall name, is the Polygalas & Pur Rata. Being tonic and actively diuretic, it is well adapted to those cases attended with an unfebrile

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The *Piprala Uncinata*, known also by
the name of *Pippisipura*, has been lately
recommended as a remedy for dropsy, & is
represented to have been beneficial. Being
an incision to the preceding article, it is well
entitly of a positive kind.

The Stimulus of Cantharides is a
very active diuretic in those cases, & should
be cautiously employed, as its irritant effects
are thereby produced.

Eupatorium Perfoliatum.

Being tonic & diaphoretic it appears
well adapted to those cases, originating in
mechanical vibrations.

Digitalis Purpurea. of moderate power

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a priori, from the well known operation
of digitalis, that it ought to be located
with those remedies, for the preceding form
of anaesthesia, but experience has proven
its ineffectuality. It was originally introduced
by the celebrated Dr. Herting, with
high commendation. Various diversifications
have been the subject, with regard to its
efficiency. Mr. Berries relates, a great
number of cases, in which comparative trials
were made with the digitalis & the
superioras, Potassa, from which it appears,
that the latter medicine are very
far superior. Nevertheless abundant
testimony could be adduced of its power,
in almost every species of dropsy; and we
may suppose that the diversified account
has originated from the administration
of the medicine, in different states of the
system. Dr. Chapman is of opinion

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that it is in atonic cases, that the medicine decidedly displays its best powers. We should be cautious not to proceed too far with the medicine, unless its mode of operation be evident, as it requires the peculiarity of remaining dormant for some time, & of suddenly developing its full effects.—

Come lastly now to consider the local treatment of diarrhoea, having detailed the most important general remedies.

When the extremities are much distended with water, which is accompanied with considerable uneasiness, much relief may be obtained, by evacuating it. This should be effected by making small punctures with a lancet; which should not be too deep, or

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Erysipelas, inflammation & gangrene might
therefore result. These affections sometimes
occur in cellular dropsy, especially in
the extremities.

Others from the exudate fluid now
produced by the effused fluid, or from the
topical action of the capillary vessels, the
vitality of the integuments, is exceedingly so
much impaired, as to cause gangrene
or mortification -

Under such circumstances, blisters
which are so beneficial to arrest the progress
of mortification, preceded by inflammation
(of which I would observe were introduced
in Dr. Physic) are totally inadmissible:
indeed they sometimes occasion the very
misery in question.

The practice recommended by

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Dr. Chapman, is to compress the extremity
both above & below,^{the part affected}, with a flannel roller
tightly applied. This operates on a principle
easily applicable; namely by imparting tone
& warmth to the enfeebled limb, whereby it is
enabled to resist the further extension of
the putrefactive process. This method of
treatment, I believe, originated with Dr.
Chapman.

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It only remains now, for me to
describe the method of fulfilling the
second general indication of cure, to wit,
to prevent the reaccumulation of water.

When the case, is in some degree local,
friction & the lazed shooting air of
considerable service, in preventing the
reproduction of water.—

from the disease, and the
most useful of the following
remedies, in their order, will be
the following: the power of the
lungs, according to Dr.
H. H. Smith, who has
written a book on the
diseases of the lungs,
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the use of the following
remedies: the first
is the use of the
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With respect to the general remedies, we should resort to Tonics, the best of which are the Cinchona & Phalacaster.

Should Tonics not prove effectual, but on the contrary should there be strong predisposition to an accumulation of water, we must endeavor to change the state of the system, by introducing mercury gradually, as an alterative. If the patient should be incapable of bearing the operation of this medicine, the Nitric Acid may be advantageously substituted.

The diet should be nutritious, and exercise particularly enforced. The latter has of itself frequently effected a cure of the dropsy.

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